

KIDNAPED

One Story Leads
to Another

By SILAS ARMSTRONG

"Mark," said Mr. Chandler, "here's a cent; go get me a paper."

It was 6 o'clock in the evening, and day and night were mingling. A boy, who was ten years old, started for the paper. The walk before him there and back would require about ten minutes. Twenty minutes passed and he had not returned. His mother began to grow anxious. Her husband laughed at her. Dinner was announced, and still no word from Mark. Mrs. Chandler insisted that the father should go to the newspaper and make inquiries. He consented and learned that the boy had been there, bought a paper and gone away with it in the direction of his home.

This is what happened to Mark. While walking home a carriage drove up to the sidewalk beside him, two men alighted, seized the boy, put him into the carriage, got in with him, shut the door and were driven away. There was not a person near to see what had been done.

Mark Chandler was a very bright boy. He was a boy's boy, not a girl's boy by any means. He had no use for indoor playthings, except that in the garret of his home he had a workshop and various electrical contrivances. He knew nothing of electric theories, but had played with batteries to turn miniature mills, ring bells and make tiny lights so often that he had become quite conversant with the adjustment of wires. His other amusements were baseball, football and in winter skating. Altogether Mark was as well calculated as any boy of his age to take care of himself.

He knew he was being kidnaped, and from the lingo in which his captors conversed he judged they were Italians. Of course he was terribly frightened, but it didn't take him very long to recover his equanimity sufficiently to notice the direction in which he was being taken. He had been about the city more or less and knew some locations. But he was not driven in a straight course and soon lost his bearings. It was in the spring of the year, the length of the twilight had considerably lengthened, and the boy could see landmarks if he only recognized them. Presently he passed a risk where he had skated. After this the carriage turned down a broad avenue, which he distinctly remembered, but did not know its name. The lamps were lighted, and he saw the names of the streets crossed. Bogart street was one of them, and into this the carriage turned. Not far from the corner of the street and the avenue the carriage stopped at a large house. It stood alone and had the appearance of being unoccupied. Mark was taken into it by a back door, but there were no lights, and after passing through a basement hall and up a short stairway he found himself in a handsomely furnished room in which a gas jet was burning. Besides the two men was a woman, a veritable hag, and, though he understood not a word of their talk, he knew that the men were turning him over to her as his jailer. After a brief consultation the two men went out of the room, followed by the woman, who locked the door after her.

Mark threw himself on a lounge and cried till she came back with some bread and a little butter and sugar on it. She told him in Italian-English not to cry, giving him to understand that he would be well treated. This helped him to recover his equanimity, and he ate the supper she had provided for him. Then she took him upstairs to a large bedroom, in which the gas jet was turned low, and told him to go to bed.

The kidnapers were evidently either caretakers of the house or, knowing that it was vacant, had forced an entrance and appropriated it to their use. Mark didn't consider this. He was too young. But he did consider means of escape. His father had once locked him in a room for disobedience and shortly after found him playing baseball with his boy companions. Mark had slid down a drain pipe. As soon as the woman left him he began to make investigations. He raised a window so stealthily as not to make a sound that could be heard and looked out. He was on the third story in the rear of the house and nothing near by which he might get down. He noticed a telephone wire leading into a room below and wished he might get near it long enough to send a message. But it was not likely that his captors would permit him to do so.

He longed also for the battery he had at home and wires to connect it with the telephone wires, thinking he might send a message. But he was perfectly safe where he was, and at last, giving up trying to devise means of escape, he threw himself on the bed. There he fell to thinking how anxious his father and mother would be about him and cried himself to sleep.

Early in the morning the woman awakened him and took him out of the room he occupied. She had no idea of letting him stay in the daytime where he might attract the attention of those outside and communicate with them. She took him downstairs to the kitchen, where she gave him something to eat.

After that she compelled him to remain there with her while she did certain chores.

The door of the kitchen closet stood open, and Mark could see that on its shelves were certain remnants of stores that were not likely to have been bought by his captors. They had evidently been left there by those who had occupied the premises before it had been closed. One thing Mark saw put an idea into his head. It was a lemon. His grandfather, who had been a soldier in the civil war, had been captured and imprisoned. He had communicated with friends without by writing letters which would pass inspection, but on being heated the real missive, that had been invisible, would appear. Mark had often heard him tell the story of how by this means he was assisted to escape, and it occurred to him that if he could get hold of that lemon he might write a note to his father. The idea was very vague in his mind, but one thing he determined on, to steal the lemon.

He was permitted to walk around the room, and watching his opportunity when the hag's back was turned to him while she stood at the sink, he pounced upon it and put it in his pocket. That was as far as he got for some time. Nevertheless, his little brain was at work, and finally he hit upon a plan. He said to the woman: "Please let me write papa to come and take me away."

"Hush!" grunted the woman. "You no write anybody."

"I'll tell him to pay you a whole lot of money."

The woman's eyes brightened at this, but she made no reply. When one of the men came the same afternoon Mark heard him and the woman discussing something, and evidently he was the subject of their discussion. When it was finished the man went into another room and returned with pen, ink and paper.

"You write your father to send \$10,000 and I take you home."

Mark sat down at a table to write without having the slightest idea how he was going to use the lemon juice. Indeed, with the two watching him it would be impossible. He wrote a letter and on reading it over found that he had left out certain words. He laid it aside and wrote another. While writing the second letter it occurred to him that he might have use for the first and he should secure it. But his captors were watching him every moment. When he finished the second letter and they were both eagerly reading it he found an opportunity to put the first in his pocket. Then when they returned him his letter they had read that he might enclose and address it, he read it over, tore it up and began to write another.

The Italians gave him a sound cuff for what he had done, but he did not mind that if he could only follow a plan he had in view. He wrote another letter, which he purposely spelled: then another, in which he wrote the amount of the ransom wrong. Then he said he had changed his mind and wouldn't write to his father after all. Since his captors were now bent on his doing so, they endeavored to force him to write another letter by repeated thrashings. But he only said "Tomorrow," and at last they desisted.

When Mark was put to bed—this time in a room with the windows nailed up—he wrote in lemon juice with a match a description of the house in which he was imprisoned and its location, so far as he could give it. The next morning, when alone with the hag, he told her he would write the letter. She gave him the writing materials and he wrote while she did her chores. Finally he handed her a letter in an envelope. It was the one he had first written, with a postscript, "Burn up this letter when you have read it."

When the man who had been there the day before came again the woman showed him the letter. When he came to the postscript Mark saw that he was talking to the woman about it. They finally seemed to agree to let it stand, probably considering it, if of any importance, rather an advantage to them. The man replaced the letter in the envelope and took it away with him.

Meanwhile the Chandler family were in a continued agony. One afternoon, on entering his house, Mr. Chandler found Mark's letter that had been slipped under the door. With it were instructions as to how to pay the ransom. The postscript arrested him. He surmised that Mark had been forced to write the letter and the postscript. At any rate, he had no idea of burning the letter. But in time he began to wonder as to his father's story of how he had used lemon juice to effect his escape from prison. He held the letter before a hot fire and the problem was solved.

The same night, with a force of police, Mr. Chandler broke into the house and made a thorough search. They found nothing and hope was beginning to desert them when they entered the basement. Hearing them, Mark began to shout. Mr. Chandler raised the lid of a stationary washtub, and Mark jumped into his arms.

The police took care of those they found in the house, and Mr. Chandler took the boy home to his mother, who smothered him with kisses.

"How did you happen to think of the lemon juice racket, Mark?" asked his father.

"I wouldn't have thought of it if I hadn't remembered grandpa's prison story."

There was no use in the kidnapers putting in a defense, for Mark identified the woman and the man who had taken his letter, and they are now serving a term in state prison. The other man was never found.

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THRIFT IN FRANCE.

The Saving System That is Directed by the Government.

The resources of the French people have always been a surprise to the rest of the world. The country has repeatedly recovered from most exhausting wars apparently through the very small savings accumulated by its lower classes. The peasants of France are landowners to an extent hardly equalled in any other country. The saving system known as the Credit Foncier, which is sanctioned and directed by the French government, is to a certain extent responsible for the thrifty spirit shown throughout France.

The plan provides that a man may borrow on his land very close to the complete value by arranging in advance the number of years that he will take to pay back the loan. His interest payments are then arranged at so much per year, the amount being greater or less, depending on how soon he intends that these payments should completely pay off his debt. If the payments are to continue for fifty years the payments are very small. If the whole mortgage is to be paid off in a shorter period the yearly payments are larger.

There is an added feature which would not be considered possible in this country—viz, an occasional lottery drawing, by which the man who draws the lucky ticket has his mortgage entirely canceled. The system provides an absolutely safe means of saving and is an encouragement to buy and pay for real estate. Against these bonds and mortgages the Credit Foncier issues its bonds in small amounts bearing interest at 3 per cent or less, which are sold in large quantities to investors of moderate means.

We have had nothing like it in America, and as a result our people have grown up to a very careless scale of expenditure.—J. Wray Cleveland in Leslie's Weekly.

FREAKS AMONG FISH.

Weird Sea Life in Bartlett's Deep, Off the Cuban Coast.

Cuba ends to the south in a huge hammer of mountains 8,000 feet high and steeping sheer into the sea. The wall does not end there, but continues its precipitous descent into the 700 mile long abyss called Bartlett's deep. This gigantic submarine valley is nearly four miles deep and eighty miles wide.

At a mile and a half the pressure of the water is nearly two tons to the square inch. The ooze that comes up from such a depth, though the equator runs overhead, is cold as hoarfrost. It is ten times certain that no vegetation can grow there.

As in our world none but the vegetables are able to make food, it ought to follow that in the depths of the sea there should be no animal life. As a matter of fact, these glooms are inhabited by the most grotesque and chimerical of all fishes. It would seem as though in the darkness life had taken every imaginable license to be ugly and bizarre. Cannibalism is evidently the only method of life, and its equipment runs to every kind of extravagance.

There are fish with teeth so long that they cannot close their mouths, fish that draw their stomachs over prey larger than themselves, fish with no more mouth than a leech and getting their living as leeches, fish with huge myopic eyes and fish frankly blind. Probably none of them comes from depths quite beyond the region of light, though a great many of them go poking about their ghoulish business furnished with lanterns of the glowworm type.—London Nation.

Old Time Prices.

Perhaps the housewife of today with a turn for economics would like to know what the quaint Dutch wrouns paid for their household supplies in 1675, when bears roamed over Manhattan island not far north of the present city hall and lambs bleated in the meadows around Wall street. Well, pork was 3 pence a pound, beef 2 pence, butter 6 pence, beer 2 pence a mug. Lodging was 2 pence a night, meals 6 pence and board by the week 5 shillings. But then it must be remembered that labor brought only 2 shillings 6 pence a day.—New York Tribune.

Troublesome Account.

"My husband has given me a checking account."

"Isn't that lovely? Now you can buy anything you want and just write out a check for it."

"Yes. I'm rather sorry on one account, though. It seems such a lot of trouble to have to write out a check for one's car fare, especially when the cars are crowded or when you have to pay as you enter."—Chicago Record-Herald.

The Lynx.

The lynx is a great yellow, long legged cat nearly the size of a collie dog, with a stumpy tail and camel's hair pencils on the tips of his ears. His weapons are his claws, and they are terrible weapons, sharp as razors and so large that the imprint of a lynx's paw in the snow is actually almost the size of that of a bear.

Frost.

White frost is the ordinary frozen dew or hoarfrost. Black frost occurs when the cold is so intense as to freeze vegetation and cause it to turn black without the formation of hoarfrost.

Her Influence Outlived Her.

"Why did the widower break his engagement to be married?"

"He feared that he hadn't picked out the kind of woman to suit his true wife."—New York Press.

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